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TAGS: [PBTS](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [TN](#) [GM](#) [RS](#) [MD](#)

SUBJECT: NO VORONIN-ZUBAKOV AGREEMENT ON TRANSNISTRIA;
CONCERN ABOUT RUSSIAN NATIONALISTS IN MOLDOVA

Classified By: Ambassador Michael D. Kirby for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) Summary: In a meeting with the DCM, Presidential advisor Marc Tkaciuk categorically denied the existence of any agreement made between President Voronin and Russian Security Council Deputy Secretary Yuriy Zubakov. The meeting with Zubakov mostly concerned domestic political issues and the emergence of Moldovan political groups affiliated with Russian nationalists. Tkaciuk repeated Moldovan government (GOM) support for USG efforts on CFE/Istanbul Commitments with two caveats: the need for a timeline for removal of Russian peacekeeping forces (PKF) and the need for real progress towards a final, political settlement of Transnistria (TN) in tandem with the removal of Russian PKF. Tkaciuk concluded that future progress on TN would depend on the outcome of U.S.-Russian talks on CFE. End summary.

No TN Agreement, Concern about Russian Nationalism in MD

¶2. (C) Tkaciuk explained that the Moldovan government (GOM) had invited Zubakov to Moldova to discuss Voronin's recent proposals to improve relations and increase interaction with Transnistrian (TN) officials. Zubakov praised Voronin's confidence-building measures (CBMs) as very interesting and very promising, the president's advisor related. He added that the Russian government was apparently discussing the CBMs internally, so Zubakov didn't have a definitive response to them. No "Kozak 2" plan emerged from the Voronin-Zubakov conversation, Tkaciuk stressed.

¶3. (C) Tkaciuk wondered why the international community had gotten spun up about the Zubakov visit, when the recent visit of Deputy Foreign Minister Grigoriy Karasin had elicited no similar wave of concern. (Note: It seemed Tkaciuk had been asked about a Voronin-Zubakov agreement during Tkaciuk's recent trip to London.) Tkaciuk noted that Zubakov had talked to ambassadors (not further specified) during his trip here and speculated that rumors about an agreement may have developed from those meetings.

¶4. (C) Moldova's domestic political situation and the emergence of Russian nationalist groups in Moldova took up most of the meeting, according to the presidential advisor. He described as alarming the appearance of political parties and movements supported by Russian "structures." He cited the November 4 "Imperial Russia" march in Moldova organized by Russian nationalists.

GOM Supports USG Proposals on CFE with Two Caveats

¶5. (C) Tkaciuk reiterated his government's interest in USG efforts to work out a solution that addressed Russia's CFE concerns and Istanbul Commitments on Transnistria. He stressed that he understood the U.S. had a broad agenda with

Russia and that Transnistria was only one small point on that agenda. The president's advisor said the GOM had two clarifications it needed to have included in any agreements on CFE and TN: 1) Russian forces guarding the Colbasna munitions should leave TN at the early stages of a final agreement and Russian PKF should have a specified deadline for their final withdrawal; and 2) parallel to the withdrawal of the Russian PKF, real movement towards a final political settlement of TN should take place. International civilian and military observers could be put in place while Russian PKF withdrew step by step, Tkaciuk opined.

¶6. (C) Tkaciuk suggested it might be easier to set a deadline for the political settlement, rather than setting one for the withdrawal of Russian PKF. For example, he thought aloud, the TN parliament could pass a law, stating that on a certain date TN would become part of a reunified Moldova. As soon as Chisinau and Tiraspol agreed to reunification, Russian PKF would not be needed. Russia could claim victory (it had kept the peace), say its forces were no longer needed, and withdraw its PKF.

Concern about German Position on Russian Peacekeepers

¶7. (C) Tkaciuk shared in confidence his worry about Germany's position on Russian PKF in TN. The presidential advisor said that German officials believed that, if Moldova and Russia agreed on the disposition of Russian PKF in TN, then the issue of foreign forces in a sovereign country was off the table and the international community had no more say in the issue. Tkaciuk thought that the Germans were trying to find a way of using the 1992 TN ceasefire accords to legitimize the Russian military presence in TN. Tkaciuk stated that

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Moldova would not agree to a Russian military presence on its territory.

¶8. (C) The DCM reiterated the U.S. position on Moldovan neutrality: it was the prerogative of the Moldovans to decide to be neutral and the U.S. would respect Moldova's choice. However, the U.S. as a sovereign nation would not guarantee the neutrality of Moldova as another sovereign nation.

"Subversives" Responsible for GOM Decision on TN Vehicle Registration

¶9. (C) The DCM noted that the recent GOM decision to require Transnistrians to register their vehicles with Chisinau authorities (else be barred from circulating in the right bank) had undermined the positive atmosphere GOM officials had created starting with Voronin's CBMs. Tkaciuk was dismayed at the decision and noted that it had not been carefully coordinated within the GOM. The idea had been wandering through the bureaucracy untended, Tkaciuk explained, when suddenly it appeared in the press. Minister for Reintegration Sova had been out of the country, and Tkaciuk himself learned of the decision when he read the morning news. Tkaciuk said "subversives" were responsible for issuing the government decision. He didn't know who exactly was behind it; officials were trying to find out. (Comment: The initiative came from Minister Molojen's Ministry of Information Development. End Comment.) Meanwhile, Tkaciuk grimaced, the decision had undermined fragile progress on CBMs and TN. The GOM was now trying to change parts of the decision and find a face-saving way out of the mess.

Next Steps

¶10. (C) When asked if the Russian elections would slow down the search for a resolution to the TN conflict, Tkaciuk

thought not. The presidential advisor dismissed the recent Russian Duma vote confirming Russia's December withdrawal from CFE as merely an instrument that President Putin could wield in the ongoing CFE discussions with NATO allies. When no longer needed, Tkaciuk said, the Russians would just hang the idea back up on its nail. Asked about Moldova's next steps on TN, Tkaciuk said they depended on the outcome of the conversations between Russia and the U.S. on CFE. Moldova has done all it could, Tkaciuk concluded.

Comment

¶11. (C) This time the storm around rumors of another TN agreement/plan was more of a rain shower. Perhaps we're a little wiser, perhaps a little more cynical, or just less hopeful. Tkaciuk, the official who most closely reflects President Voronin's thinking on TN, seems to be waiting for the outcome of the U.S. discussions with Russia on CFE. Other than repairing the damage to Chisinau-Tiraspol relations caused by the vehicle-registration flap, Moldovan officials don't appear to be preparing new efforts on the Transnistrian front. From our vantage point, we believe that Moldova's next steps on TN will be tied to the CFE discussions.

¶12. (C) Tkaciuk's idea about establishing a deadline for a political settlement rather than focusing on a time line for withdrawal of Russian PKF is a good one, if we assumed the Russians would recognize they were no longer needed after Chisinau and Tiraspol had agreed to reunification -- an assumption we're not prepared to make. Either way removal of Russia's ammunition stored at Colbasna is a necessary step for the withdrawal process.

¶13. (C) When Tkaciuk discussed Russian nationalists in Moldova, he might have been concerned about the possible involvement of individuals sent from the Russian Federation to influence the 2009 national, parliamentary elections. A couple years ago, governmental leaders accused Russian groups of trying to undermine the Communist Party during the 2005 parliamentary elections and prohibited a Russian group from entering Moldova. Because of Voronin's rejection of the Russian Federation's Kozak Memorandum in 2003, Russian operatives may have been trying to retaliate against Voronin's party. It seems Tkaciuk is Voronin's closest advisor on Communist Party affairs. If so, Tkaciuk may want to forestall a return to the Moldovan and Russian cycle of retaliation of 2005 and will keep a close eye on these developments.

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